

Central Montana Family Planning
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March 15, 2007

To: House Appropriations Committee

I am writing to request your support on HB 638. The appropriation of \$600,000.00 each fiscal year from the general fund to the department of public health and human services to fund contraceptive services for Title X clinics is critical in Montana.

Without these much needed funds, Montana's women who access our services will be denied affordable contraceptives at our clinics. This then leads to more unplanned and unwanted pregnancies.

Most women in Montana can not afford the high cost prescription contraceptives at their local pharmacies (if there is a pharmacy in their communities).

I can speak to you as a Director of a Family Planning program for the last 16 years. This past year has been the worst one I have ever experienced. The pharmaceutical companies really put each of our sites in a very precarious position with their increased contraceptive costs. It was cost prohibitive to purchase some of our supplies and in our case we had to change our formulary drastically and stop offering most of the brands of contraceptives we had previously been able to purchase.

This placed and still continues to place a barrier to care for some women when they have to be switched to a new type of contraceptive because of our inability to afford their prior method. Some women complain the new types are causing side effects. This makes user compliance an issue and possibly a risk for pregnancy.

With the increased financial burden on our Title X clinics we struggle to maintain our already tight budgets. I have had to make many changes this year and am concerned about the future of our rural clinic.

We have a strong foundation in Central Montana and have almost 700 men, women who depend on us to be here in the future. I know I can count on you to not let the men, women of Central Montana down. Please support HB 638.
Thank you

Sue Irvin,
Director & Health Educator



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March 15, 2007

Representative Sinrud, Chair
House Appropriations Committee
Montana House of Representatives
PO Box 200400
Helena, MT 59620-0400

RE: HB 638

Dear Representative Sinrud and Members of the Appropriations Committee,

I am writing on behalf of Flathead Family Planning to express the need for state funding for high cost contraceptives. Flathead Family Planning is one of the 15 publicly funded family planning clinics located throughout Montana offering comprehensive family planning, medical, counseling and educational services to women in need. We rely on the Federal Title X funding (which only comprises 34% of our total budget) as well as patient fees and donations to provide family planning and reproductive health care to residents of the Flathead Valley. In CY 2006, we provided services to 3415 men and women and 74% of those clients were at or below 150% of poverty. Only 5% of the family planning clients were served by Medicaid. The rising cost of contraceptives, laboratory tests and health care personnel has created many challenges for this program in meeting the needs of the low-income residents we serve.

Flathead County Family Planning is facing an estimated 52% increase in the cost for contraceptives for the next year. As a result of this significant increase, we have been forced to look for savings in other areas of operations including raising prices for clients even marginally above the poverty level and limiting the choice of methods and the amount of contraceptive supplies offered to clients. We have also chosen to switch to generic brands of contraceptive supplies. However the prices are still far more that we had previously paid (many are double the price) and often there are no available supplies to match the surge in demand. I currently have three different brands of contraceptive pills on backorder with no potential release date, forcing our clients to switch brands as we try to find an alternative that will continue to meet their needs. As 57% of our clients qualify for free services and supplies, they do not have an alternative to get a prescription filled at the local pharmacy as we wait for pills to become available from the pharmaceutical companies.

One of the goals of our program is to decrease the incidence of unintended pregnancies. In 2006 Flathead Family Planning prevented an estimated 2074 unplanned pregnancies. We can only accomplish this goal by having affordable contraceptives available for our patients. Funding to provide those contraceptives will ensure that the residents of Flathead County continue to have access to the services they need to allow couples to plan for pregnancy when they are best able to care for their children.

Respectfully,

Wendy Doely, Director
Flathead Family Planning

It is the mission of the Flathead City-County Health Department to assure the conditions in which people can be healthy through collaboration, education, promoting stewardship of our resources, and providing preventive health services to our community.